

History of Irrigation in Lehi

1913-1950

By Virgil Peterson

Irrigation has had marked and steady progress in Lehi and surrounding territory. At one time when there were only thirty families in Lehi, it was thought that the water and land would not support more; yet there has been a steady influx of people.

The system of ditches and control methods have been improved so that at the end of the century there are some forty-five hundred people living here and there are seven thousand acres under cultivation.

The main source of supply of irrigation water for Lehi comes from the snows of American Fork. Alpine and Fort Canyon, and a supplemental supply was secured when the Irrigation Company purchase eleven second feet from the Provo Reservoir Company in 1920. Some eight feet of the supply comes from Utah Lake through the Canal and Pumping plant west of Jordan River and Utah Lake. In the year 1934 the Utah Lake went dry and that source of supply was lost. The supply that came from the Provo River has continued and now is supplemented by the Deer Creek Project.

The irrigation company in 1934 drove a fourteen inch well on the property of James Schow, north of Lehi City and west of Lehi City cemetery. A motor and pump were installed and the well produced nine-hundred gallons per minute. This well has continued to operate each summer as the need requires. A second well was drilled at a point on fifth west and fourth north. Drilled by the State and the Irrigation Company, it was equipped with motor and pump and delivered twelve-hundred gallons per minute. The State Engineer denied the application of the Company to appropriate the water and the pump was sold and the well sealed.

There have been a number of projects tried, to improve the supply. One plan was the making of a ditch east of Alpine to come down over the Highland bench and deliver water into two artificial Reservoirs above, and north of Andrew Christofferson's home. This proved unsuccessful because the water washed away as soon as it was put into the reservoir due to the gravel foundation

Another project was the drilling of a well by the City and Irrigation Company at fourth west and third north. This well was a three inch pipe; was three hundred feet deep and had a good flow. The water with drainage water flowing into the Simmons pond was diverted in a ditch through town, and south and west to third south and fifth west. A well was driven near that point, but this project was not successful because the flow of water through this ditch was not sufficient to reach the land to be irrigated.

The Lehi Irrigation Company and the North Bench Irrigation Company made a new ditch north of Alpine City, and it has been very successful in saving water that previously seeped away into Dry Creek. It carried Dry Creek water through this new ditch to the For Canyon stream and then down Fort Canyon Creek to join Dry Creek at a point up-stream from the North Bench Irrigation Company diverting gate.

North Bench

In the year 1875, a survey for a ditch was made by the following men: William Austin Sr., Byron W. Brown Sr., Elisha H. Davis Jr. and John Thomas. Starting at the mouth of the canyon above Alpine it continued across the Bench to the Jordan River.

The survey was made by Mr. Thomas riding his horse ahead and carrying pegs for stakes. The other men would direct him as to which way to go by the motion of the hand, and as the sign was give a peg would be dropped. The men would follow up and drive the pegs in the ground and in this way they continued

to the Jordan River.

In the spring of 1876, they began to make the ditch, and in May 1877, the water was turned into the ditch. They named it Bull River. There have been very few changes made in the ditch up to the present time.

New Irrigation Projects

There have been new irrigation projects added to the Lehi District. This includes the land west of the Jordan River from the point of the Mountain on the north to the Saratoga Resort on the South. The water is supplied by three canals which received their supply from Provo River, Deer Creek Reservoir, and Utah Lake. These canals have added thousands of acres to the Lehi irrigation area, and the crops have added much to the economic wellness of her people

-Lehi Centennial History 1850-1950 page 508-510.